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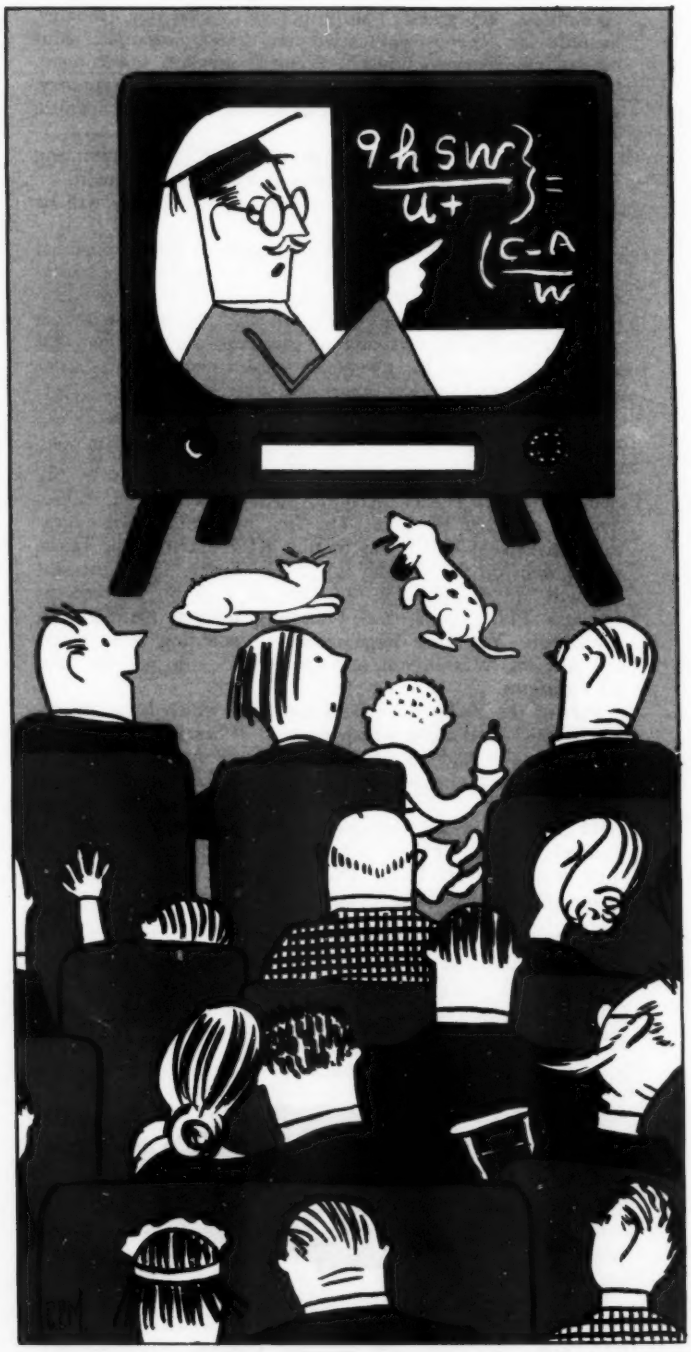

Drawings by C. P. Meier

Educational Television
How's It Doing?

Pretty well, thank you!

For one thing, it is causing a tremendous, far-reaching revolution in education by undermining a widely-accepted rule of thumb that says there should be one teacher for every twenty-five students. Perhaps this dictum is so highly regarded because it possesses so proud a heritage — dating back to the middle of the third century, when the venerable sage, Rabbi Raba, of ancient Babylon, ruled that "twenty-five students are to be enrolled in one class. If there are from twenty-five to forty, an assistant must be obtained. Above forty, two teachers are to be engaged."

Of course, Rabbi Raba had no inkling there would ever be something called television — or that his student-teacher ratio would be smashed into several million bits by television's power to educate on a mass basis.

In the education world there are some who still cling to Rabbi Raba's formula. To them television is merely a crude monster which harbors shrieking quizmasters and gun-toting rowdies, on horseback or on waterfront. Since they won't permit a set in their homes, what earthly reason could there be for allowing TV into their classrooms?

At the other extreme, there are a few who see television as the instrument for performing untold good. They say it can save millions of dollars by replacing manpower and womanpower in those classrooms where Rabbi Raba's 25-to-1 ratio is maintained.

Somewhere in between are those who say a mechanical device can never replace a human form. In this great middle ground are such people as Alvin C. Eurich, director and vice president of the Fund for the Advancement of Education, which has pioneered in searching into the value of teaching by TV. It also includes such organizations as the Fund for Adult Education, whose grants to educational and other institutions have helped explore the uses of TV in liberal adult education. It includes the Ford Foundation, parent group of both. It includes many others bent on finding out how much television can do to meet education needs.

Those on this middle ground know that the potential of television is enormous. They know, too, that both its detractors and its advocates must eventually appreciate the fact that TV is only an *adjunct* to the education process. With proper and fully developed use of television, it's certain that the 25-to-1 student-teacher ratio can be upped. Furthermore, the education process that traditionally has been confined to the campus and that ended with diploma presentation ceremonies can now be extended far beyond the classroom and continued throughout the span of adult life.

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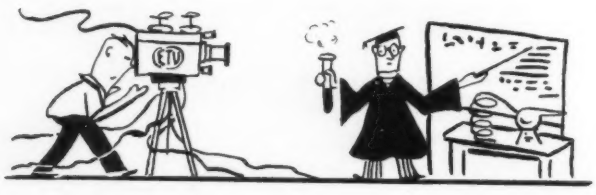
WHAT *IS* EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION?

A definition of *educational television* is important.

Education itself is any experience which enables a person to approach more nearly his potential contribution to himself and society. Educational television, then, can be said to be any television experience which broadens an individual, excites his aspirations, and extends his capabilities, thereby better equipping him to achieve his ultimate potential. It may take place at eight or eighty, at 8 a. m. or 8 p. m., in a living room or in a classroom. What it presents may come to us in any one of the following ways.

Closed circuit educational television. This consists of lectures and demonstrations, originating from a central



source, which are piped into selected classrooms and seen there by the students. The schedule of the broadcaster, both as to time and content, conforms to the academic requirements of the particular audiences for whom it is tailored.

Broadcasting by educational television stations. The programming offered over these outlets isn't designed for the huge mass audience but rather for numerous smaller audiences, each with its own special interest. Such ETV programs fall generally into three major categories. One consists of programs for use in the actual classroom, either for direct teaching purposes or to supplement and enrich educational materials. Another category consists of programming for children that provides authoritative information and seeks to develop knowledge and cultivate constructive attitudes. The third is made up of programs for adults on a wide variety of subjects, designed to achieve typical education goals, such as to inform, or to develop special skills and understandings.

Educational broadcasting by commercial stations. Many stations have worked out arrangements with colleges and universities to telecast courses for credit. For the first time, such an arrangement on a *national* basis is now in operation. An Atomic Age Physics course for college credit is being offered over about 150 stations through the National Broadcasting Company, with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education acting as the coordinating agency.

Quasi-educational broadcasting by commercial stations and networks. Sometimes to net a profit, sometimes to ease a conscience — and sometimes for both reasons — commercial stations and networks present programs primarily educational in content. *Omnibus, Small World, Meet the Press, Face the Nation* — as well as a Shakespeare play or a *U. S. Steel Hour* drama about Sigmund Freud — are in varying degree educational in nature.

A TO Z IN ETV

We are primarily concerned in this guide with TV programs over educational or commercial stations presented in cooperation with educational institutions, whether or not they carry academic credit.

Such programs literally encompass the world of education. The Fund for the Advancement of Education reported that during the 1957-58 school year, subjects being taught by television in elementary and secondary schools consisted of pretty much everything. The listing includes reading, art, music, arithmetic, Spanish, social studies, French, creative writing, health, science, geography, history, practical arts, mathematics, English, biology, algebra, geometry, driver education, personal health, typing, physics, chemistry, and trigonometry. Just reading it over gets one out of breath. For colleges and universities, it's the same sort of thing. One can learn about accounting, air science, anthropology, archeology, biology, business law, chemistry, creative arts, drama, economics, education, engineering, English, French, German, government, history, metallurgy, meteorology, music, physics, physiology, political science, psychology, social science, sociology, Spanish, speech, theology, and zoology.

The same A to Z coverage characterizes ETV programming for adults, and much of it is offered for academic credit.

If any subject is missing from the list, it probably will be added this year.

What was predicted about the growth of commercial television in its early days is also true of present-day educational TV. The picture changes fast. Any statistics committed to paper will surely be outdated before the ink is dry — even if adherents become impatient with the fact that support for TV in the classroom doesn't match that of programs sponsored by deodorants and cigarettes.

ETV ALLOCATIONS . . .

When TV allocations were being decided after World War II, the Federal Communications Commission set aside 242 television channels exclusively for the use of education. Subsequently it added 16 more. The first non-commercial educational television outlet was Station KUHT, Houston, Texas, which went on the air May 25, 1953. Today, 33 educational channels are in operation — some in such big markets as Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Boston, Detroit, and Pittsburgh. Yet some large cities — including New York, Los Angeles, Washington, and Cleveland — do not yet have ETV stations.

Part of the problem — both for cities which have operating channels and those which do not — lies in the fact that ETV was allocated an uncommonly large number of ultra-high frequency channels over which to transmit. To view these channels — or to watch commercial stations in the UHF band — a TV set owner must pay extra for an all-channel receiver or buy attachments which enable him to tune in to the UHF band. Thus the life of UHF educational broadcasters has been difficult.

. . . AND THE GROWTH OF ETV

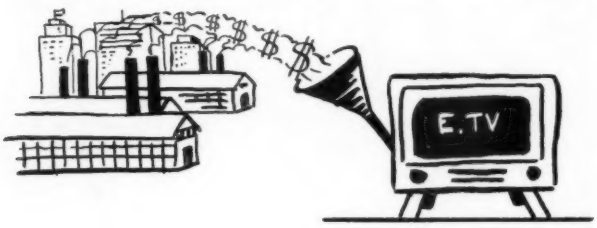
Nevertheless, the persistence of many who believe in ETV is paying off. Ralph Steetle, executive director of the Joint Council on Educational Television, told the Senate Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee in April 1958 that

ETV now has 50 million potential viewers. The financial investment in ETV, he said, stands at $60 million.

In reviewing the first five years of ETV, *Broadcasting Magazine* reported that educational television owed its success to several things. These include $27.4 million of Ford Foundation money. They include $6 million in equipment contributed or offered by commercial broadcasters. Add to this the funds appropriated by public agencies. Then there's the contribution made by lots of volunteer time and talent. There's the factor of services and counsel donated by com-

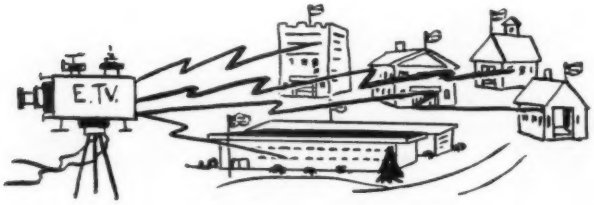
mercial broadcasters. And there's the energy and dedicated zeal of those operating the stations.

A further very important source of ETV revenue has come from those business and industrial corporations that recognize



an opportunity for community service. Many companies have contributed money to build local ETV stations. On a national basis, when the money to cover program costs was put up by the Ford Foundation and the Fund for the Advancement of Education for *Continental Classroom,* six corporations contributed one-half million dollars for telephone line charges. They were the Bell Telephone System, Standard Oil Company of California, the General Foods Fund, International Business Machines, Pittsburgh Plate Glass Foundation, and United States Steel. Their only recognition: a modest mention on the credits of the program.

As for closed circuit television, it is growing incredibly fast. Currently, approximately 200 closed circuit installations are operating in American educational institutions. The most notable of these is at Hagerstown, Maryland, where a five-year experiment in teaching by television throughout a



county-wide school system is going on. But Hagerstown is just one example. There are many more. Why? An important reason is because they have no TV channel allocation, or have a channel but no station, or because they find the closed circuit system more to their financial liking.

In those cities where educational TV stations have been built on reserved channels (or, as in the case of New York City, which has a UHF channel allocation and purchases daytime broadcasting hours from a commercial station) the output of ETV has steadily increased. These stations in 1957 presented twice as many programs as they did in 1955.

For instance Station WQED, of Pittsburgh, a pioneer in the field, now telecasts programs to more than 700 classrooms in 250 public and private schools. As a matter of fact, ETV is so well established in Pittsburgh that a veteran can earn a high school diploma without ever entering a classroom. He completes his courses by watching programs over his local station.

Station WKNO-TV, Memphis, in two eight-week courses, has enabled more than 1,000 illiterates to learn how to write their names, dial telephones, and read newspapers.

When KETC St. Louis offered a course in comparative religion, more than 1,200 men and women enrolled for credit and more than 100,000 tuned in regularly to view the programs. In the fall of 1957 when WTTW Chicago aired its TV College some 7,000 people registered for courses.

These are typical performances by educational TV stations.

Even before the NBC network began its nationwide course-for-credit, "Atomic Age Physics," commercial broadcasters were also making education history. Station WCBS-TV, New York, launched *Sunrise Semester,* a course in literature presented under the auspices of New York University. And Station WTOP-TV, Washington, D. C., introduced shorthand for young viewers.

Local educational TV stations are members of a national network through affiliation with the Educational Television and Radio Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan. ETRC bears the major responsibility for the development of national educational TV programming. As the headquarters for NET, the Educational Television and Radio Center is helping to build educational television offerings throughout the country both by supplying quality ETV programs to stations and other groups and by defining program needs through a continuing program of research. ETRC also acts as a national clearing house for information about developments in ETV.

Through ETRC's program service each affiliated NET station receives a weekly package of seven and one half hours of educational programming. The ETRC service is comprised of the best programs from educational television studios, plus series from a variety of other sources around the world featuring talent and production facilities not otherwise available to local stations. After NET programs have been aired over ETV outlets they are made available for commercial broadcasting and audio-visual uses through additional ETRC services. To date, more than 2,000 programs have been distributed through the Educational Television and Radio Center.

Occasionally, ETRC has worked with commercial broadcasting companies to produce ETV programs of merit. Beginning in the spring of 1957, the National Broadcasting Company and ETRC have jointly financed several educational television series which, using NBC producers, directors and talent, have been provided to the local educational television stations either for "live" or delayed kinescope broadcasting.

WHAT'S THE SCORE?

The late John K. Weiss, an official of the Fund for the Advancement of Education, in early 1958 told the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare:

"Television . . . is, at best, a means of communication. Bad teaching and bad education will not be automatically improved by a TV camera, a co-axial cable, or a 24 inch screen. Just as we have good books and not-so-good books, so we have superior TV instruction and inferior TV teaching. Television, like books, has already demonstrated its ability to magnify the influence and effectiveness of the superb teacher. It appears certain that, with additional experimentation, television, like books, will enable our finest teachers to give all children a kind and a quality of educational experience which has not previously been possible."

Time and time again, studies of the effectiveness of educa-

tion by television have served to encourage the ETV advocates:

In Chicago, in late 1957, "thinking" tests were administered to three groups: those watching educational TV at home, those watching it in the classroom, and those in a class without TV. Students were given a certain passage concerning a complicated issue, then asked to identify the most significant points contained in it. The TV students at home rated first, the TV-in-a-classroom group next, and the class without TV third.

In Cincinnati, chemistry instruction was given over an educational station. Simultaneously, classroom instruction was given to other students of similar ability. The average scores on the final test proved to be "significantly in favor" of the TV students.

In Hagerstown, Md., a teacher reached 1,700 students via closed circuit television, whereas her normal audience was 30.

In terms of cost, a study at Pennsylvania State University showed that the average amount spent per student for in-class teaching was $7.05 vs. $3.00 for teaching by television.

Because the opponents of education-by-television are unorganized, they do not, as yet, appear to have marshalled any resounding statistics to support their case. Instead, they employ arguments which, while apt to be weak on research data, are strong on theory and economics:

—Television could reduce the teacher's status to that of a mere monitor and test corrector.

—In teaching via television, no satisfactory means has been found to establish the essential teacher-student personal relationship.

—Television, whether closed circuit, VHF or UHF, is expensive.

With regard to expense, the Educational Television and Radio Center estimates that a minimal closed circuit operation with 15 classroom outlets can be installed for approximately $17,000. However, a layout such as that in Hagerstown — connecting a county school system of 47 schools — can cost as much as one million dollars. To establish an educational TV station, ETRC says an investment running from $300,000 to $400,000, with annual operating budgets of $150,000 and more, is necessary.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Despite the giant steps made by educational television, it may be argued that teaching by TV still has reached only the stage which the world was in when movable type was invented.

According to one official of the Ford Foundation in a statement to a Senate committee in March, 1958, the nation—for schools, colleges and adult education centers—should be thinking in terms of six simultaneous educational television channels, either closed or open-circuit, for every community in the United States. He added that by 1970, or before, the need for simultaneous educational channels will jump to 30-to-40.

If all presently allotted ETV channels were now utilized, ETV would reach 92 per cent of the population. The ETRC predicts that by 1968 there will be 100 live ETV stations. Taken together, these will reach 80 percent of the country's population.

In connection with this prediction, ETV experts state that unless new school buildings are equipped for use of television in the school program, planners will wake up to realize they have made a serious omission.

Along these lines, Dr. Alexander J. Stoddard, for ten years chairman of the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association and former school superintendent in several major cities, made a report to the Ford Foundation. Included was his recommendation that no elementary school be built without two or three large rooms, seating from 100-300 pupils each, equipped with television receiving apparatus. For junior or senior high schools, he recommended that the viewing rooms seat 200-500 students. Dr. Stoddard also urged that all new buildings be fully equipped for producing and internally transmitting telecasts originating within schools.

The human aspects — as well as the technical — of any expansion of educational TV will require planning. For example, special criteria are suggested in the choosing of ETV teachers. Those standards already employed by the St. Louis school system are a case in point. Each ETV teacher is expected to possess warmth of personality, pleasantness of manner, fluency of speech, telegenic personality, and previous success as a classroom teacher.

There is general agreement that those responsible for educational TV should seek ways to improve the appeal of their program bill-of-fare — even though they are attempting to reach only a segment of the TV commercial audience.

Some new thinking on the part of the public may be in order, too. There's the idea that ETV is not merely a means of alleviating the teacher shortage, or of stretching the education dollar — although these considerations are not to be lightly dismissed.

Educational television can be interesting and enlightening if it is approached with selectivity. Viewing an educational program just for the sake of acquiring a slice of knowledge might be compared with opening a college catalogue, and, at random, choosing a course. Playing academic Russian roulette could be as intellectually deadly as playing the real game.

On the other hand, if educational television is readily available and if the content is right for each school, college and adult audience for which it is intended, it is sure to prove invaluable. If Milton Berle, "Howdy Doody" and Arthur Godfrey could build commercial television into the mammouth institution that it is today, French, American History, General Chemistry, *Continental Classroom,* and *Sunrise Semester* among other things should be able to do the same for ETV.

Here are a few questions, to begin with, which we might think about and ask ourselves concerning ETV.

How much of it have we looked at personally, and how do we feel about what we've seen?

What suggestions for improvement?

What are the hours and days of the week during which programs qualifying as educational are available in our viewing vicinity? Are they O. K., or would we suggest changes?

What is being done about ETV, in the forms and methods discussed in this Guide, within our own vicinity? Is it too much, enough, or do we feel more should be done? If so, how and by whom?

The Editors are indebted to the Educational Television and Radio Center, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and to Mr. Don Bishop, former Director of Community Services, National Broadcasting Company, for advice and helpfulness in the preparation of this Guide.

COMING: Our Policy in Latin America: — What Is It? Where Has It Succeeded? Where Has It Failed? What More Is Needed?

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